

Fine entertainment despite the clogging, ankle-deep mud

Southall 1, Wycombe Wanderers 1

WYCOMBE WANDERERS must be confident of reaching the third round of the Mithras Cup after holding Athenian League Premier Division side Southall to a one-all draw in the first leg of their second round tie on Tuesday evening.

But Wanderers were forced to fight all the way. After taking the lead in the 11th minute through Keith Samuels they were knocked out of their stride by the Southall hit-and-run tactics.

Wycombe also found the clogging, strength-sapping pitch unsuitable to their style of play and for long periods had to be content just to let Southall come at them.

Wanderers' best spell came just after the interval when Worley and Merrick had the Southall defence in trouble for the first time. Southall's backs Nelhams and Hopkins were given a harrowing time but the Wycombe inside trio were slightly shot-shy.

The defence, however, was in fine form against the fast moving home forwards. The ever-alert John Pratt, making a rare appearance in the senior squad, was constantly in action as the Southall forwards came pounding through taking advantage of the treacherous conditions which made it a nightmare for defenders trying to recover.

Despite the ankle-deep mud the pace was extremely fast with Wycombe breaking much quicker and cleaner than their hosts. They were given a fine start when Lailey cleverly back-headed over King and Samuels swept the ball past the stranded 'keeper.

DEEPER

As half-time approached Wycombe were pushed deeper

and deeper into their own half, with only a fine interception by Horseman — more mobile than many of his colleagues — saving a nasty situation.

Ten minutes from the interval Southall equalised. Not for the first time left-winger Sidney slipped past Faulkner and crossed to the far post. Pratt obviously thought the ball was going over but it dipped suddenly and sneaked under the bar.

Southall hit the post immediately after the interval and that was the last seen of them as an attacking force for the next 20 minutes.

Merrick strung out the home defence with a fine run along the left—but his pin-point cross was wasted by Lailey, who pushed it past the far post. Worley burst through to place the ball on Samuels' head but it lacked power enabling Walker to save on the line.

Then Samuels raced clear but was slowed by the mud and finally robbed, by centre-half King. Wycombe should have made sure of the tie in this period and they nearly paid for it in the end, only two despairing saves by Pratt, retrieving the situation as Southall regained the initiative.

Wycombe Wanderers: J. Pratt; V. Faulkner, C. Gale; B. Baker, I. Rundle, D. Thomas; L. Worley, A. Horseman, K. Samuels, J. Lailey, L. Merrick. Sub: L. Temel.

Wycombe Wanderers Reserves 4
Dulwich Hamlet Reserves 1

VIV BUSBY put forward his application for Tony Horseman's first-team place with an, in more than one sense, opportunist hat-trick against Dulwich Hamlet Reserves at Loakes Park on Saturday (writes Patrick Vercoe).

With the first team without a fixture, I suspect, like me, following the shock news of Horseman's resignation earlier in the week, a number of the Wanderers supporters watched the match to see if there was a likely candidate to take on the scoring mantle.

In a rather mundane and pedestrian-paced game it was Busby's hat-trick which lifted the afternoon's proceedings, coupled with captain John Pratt's faultless exhibition of goalkeeping.

After ten minutes Wycombe went ahead as Kurka, with a clever reverse pass, gave Busby the opening to shoot in from just two yards out.

However, five minutes later Dulwich equalised with a well-taken goal. Pratt did well to block a drive and Berry pounced on the rebound which he slotted in effortlessly.

Just two minutes from the break Wycombe regained the lead with a fine set-piece goal from a corner. Kurka flighted the ball into the area where Reed nodded forward and Busby, moving in, bent forward to head in.

Following the break, wing-half Rogers moved forward to put Wycombe reserves in a commanding position with a 60th minute goal.

The pace became slower as the contest entered its final stages although the individual exchanges heated up. Busby became the target for some over zealous tackling and in one clash lost part of his shirt torn away from his right shoulder.

Also, he received a stern lecture from the referee for showing dissent at a throw-in decision which did not meet entirely with his approval.

However, it was, Busby who had the last laugh when, with a minute remaining, Kurka made a fine run and his cross was headed in by Busby, standing close in, to complete his trio.